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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON MACEDONIA,S
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the
June 5, 2008 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna:

Begin Text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States notes with serious concern developments surrounding the June 1st parliamentary election in Macedonia. ODIHR,s preliminary report notes that key OSCE commitments were not met. Violence, intimidation, and fraud deprived many Macedonian citizens of their fundamental democratic right. The electoral campaign period saw an atmosphere of fear build in certain parts of the country, as shootings, ransacking of political party offices, and other acts of intimidation occurred with disturbing frequency. There were other troubling irregularities during the campaign, including disproportionate and biased coverage of the governing coalition in the state media.

On election day, the violence continued, accompanied by a large number of disturbing voting irregularities, including theft of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes, intimidation of voters, poll workers and observers, including the temporary illegal detention of an ODIHR observer, and manipulation of voter lists in polling stations, especially in the northwest part of Macedonia and in the city of Skopje.

In line with Macedonia,s OSCE commitments, we look to the authorities in Macedonia to vigorously investigate, prosecute, and appropriately sanction those responsible for election irregularities and violence. We welcome Prime Minister Gruevski,s commitment to seek re-runs of the election in those districts where voters were prevented from expressing their will. We urge the Government to work closely with ODIHR to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to remedy election shortcomings, to ensure peaceful reruns free of fear and intimidation, and to restore legitimacy to the voting in those areas that saw violence and other disturbances. This is an essential government responsibility, and how Macedonia handles these issues will be a critical test of the maturity of the country,s democratic institutions.

Despite the significant shortcomings I have just noted, there were some positive features of the election process. ODIHR reported that the elections were well administered procedurally and that the State Election Commission operated in a generally transparent and efficient manner.

Mr. Chairman, the United States would like to take this opportunity to highlight once again the excellent and timely work of ODIHR in observing and reporting on this election. We also appreciate that authorities in Macedonia cooperated closely with ODIHR in the campaign and on election day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
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